(b) whether some conversion work is still to be executed;

(c) if so, the details thereof and

(d) the time by which the complete gauge conversion of the said route would be done and the same would become operational?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) 444 Kms between Delhi-Ajmer and 52 kms between Ahmedabad-Mahesana sections have been converted into broad-gauge.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) 423 Kms of Ajmer-Mahesana section is yet to be converted into broad gauge.

(d) By February, 1997.

[Translation]

Payment to Cotton Growers

4130. SHRI DATA MEGHE :
SHRI G.M. KUNTURKAR :

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government are aware that the outstanding dues of the cotton growers have not been paid till date in the country particularly in Maharashtra;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor, and

(c) the steps being taken by the Government for immediate payment of the dues to the farmers?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (EXCLUDING THE DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND DAIRYING) (SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA) : (a) As of date the entire payment of the dues to the cotton growers has been made in Maharashtra by the Maharashtra State Co-operative Cotton Growers Marketing Federation Ltd. The Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) did not procure cotton under price support operation during the last three years in rest of the country. There is no outstanding dues to the CCI for the earlier period.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

[English]

Conversion of Rail Line

4131. SHRI P. KODANDA RAMAIAH : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the conversion work for the Bangalore-Meeraj rail line is going at a very slow pace;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the conversion work is likely to be completed by the end of 1997; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) to (d) Gauge Conversion work between Bangalore-Miraj has already been completed and the constructed BG line has been opened to traffic on 29.05.95.

Freedom Fighter Pension

4132. SHRI ANAND RATNA MAURYA : Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) the benefits the Government propose to provide to Freedom Fighters' children besides the ones they are presently getting;

(b) whether the Government propose to provide free medical care service to them; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and the schemes formulated or likely to be formulated in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI INDERJIT GUPTA) : (a) At present there is no proposal under consideration of the Government to provide other benefits to the Children of the Freedom Fighters besides the ones they are getting.

(b) and (c) Freedom Fighter Pensioners and their dependants are already provided free medical facilities in all Central Government Hospitals and Hospitals under the Control of Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE). C.G.H.S. facilities have also been extended to them. As such, there appears to be no need to formulate separate scheme for their medical care and expenses to be borne by the Government.

Amendments in CRZ Notification

4133 SHRI V.M. SUDHEERAN : Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government are aware of the difficulties being faced by Kerala as a result of the Coastal Management Plan of his Ministry imposing severe restrictions on the construction works in the coastal area;

(b) whether the Government are considering to take necessary steps to amend the provisions of the CRZ Notification issued by Ministry on August 16, 1994 in this regard and formulate guidelines to suit Kerala's interests; and

(c) if so, the detail thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (CAPT. JAI NARAYAN PRASAD NISHAD) : (a) to (c) The Coastal Regulation Zone Notification issued by Ministry of Environment and Forests imposed restrictions on setting up and expansion of

industries, operations or processes etc., in the Coastal Regulation Zone. Some activities are declared as prohibited and for regulating permissible activities the coastal stretches within 500 m of high tide line are classified into four categories namely CRZ-I, CRZ-II, CRZ-III and CRZ-IV. Construction activities in different categories of CRZ areas shall be regulated as per norms of notification. Structural adjustment in developmental planning may be required accordingly. During discussions held, Kerala Government has expressed some difficulties in implementing the provisions of notification. At this stage no proposal is under consideration of Government for amending the notification with specific reference to Kerala.

Postponement of Out Agency

4134. SHRI R.B. RAI : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the opening of an Out Agency at Bijanbari in Darjeeling district has been postponed;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor; and

(c) the measures taken by the Government to compensate the delay in the opening of an Out Agency?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c). An Out Agency was slated to be opened at Bijanbari on 9.8.96. But the same had to be postponed in view of complaints from leading citizens of the locality against the proposed out agent. Further action will be taken by the Railways on the basis of the report submitted by the joint investigating team nominated for the same. Compensation for the delay does not therefore arise at this stage.

Pollution by Thermal Power Stations

4235. SHRI JAG MOHAN : Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state :

(a) whether any study has recently been conducted by an independent agency to assess the pollution impact of thermal power stations in the major metropolitan cities of the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the extent to which this pollution is caused by the defective quality of coal with high fly-ash content supplied by the Coal India limited and its subsidiary companies; and

(d) the corrective measures taken or proposed to be taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (CAPT. JAI NARAYAN PRASAD NISHAD) : (a) to (c) According to a study conducted by the Central Pollution Control Board, coal based thermal power stations are among the major polluting sources in metropolitan cities. The Indian coal presently supplied to all thermal power plants has an ash content varying from approximately 35 to 45 per cent. The process of utilizing such a high ash coal would affect the ambient air and water quality due to emission of fly-ash and its disposal on land if adequate preventive and control measures are not adopted. Further, use of such poor quality coal affects the efficiency of boilers as also increases the coal consumption as also auxiliary power consumption.

(d) The corrective measures taken by the Government include the following :

(i) All thermal power plants have been directed to comply with the prescribed standards on a time-bound basis. Besides, while issuing clearance to new plants, the Government stipulates a number of pollution control measures and environmental safeguards. Further, the power plants are required to utilize fly-ash to the maximum extent possible.

(ii) The Central Pollution Control Board has issued directions under Section 5 of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 to a number of thermal power plants which have not yet provided adequate pollution control measures.

(iii) Government has sanctioned two projects for setting up of non-coking coal washeries at Bina (Singrauli Coalfields, Piparwar (North Karanpura Coal fields).

(iv) Coal India have called for promotion of private entrepreneurs, both Indian as well as foreign, through global tenders for setting up of non-coking coal washeries under Build-Own-Operate Scheme.

(v) Steps have been initiated for checking quality control of coal despatches.

Fish Culture

4136. SHRI MULLAPPALLY RAMACHANDRAN : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) whether any restrictions have been imposed on the inland fish culturing;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the extent of brackish water fish culturing now being carried on in Kerala and their annual fish production?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (EXCLUDING THE DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND DAIRYING) (SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) Question does not arise.

(c) An area of 14,657 ha. is reported to have been brought under brackish water culture in Kerala in 1995-96. 9,000 metric tonnes of shrimp was produced in Kerala in 1995-96.